

Interview with Francesca Mills and Sheldon Mills

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

FRANCESCA AND SHELDON MILLS

Interviewed by: Jewell and Guido Fenzi

Interview date: January 6, 1987

SHELDON MILLS: Francesca was talking about the separation we had. The Harvard separation was because her father had had a thrombosis an- actually he did recove- she was needed, being an only child, in Oregon. And also, at that time, I think my salary had gotten up to \$3,500 a year at Class 8.

Q (Jewell): Extraordinary.

SHELDON MILLS: That's all you got, although the Department paid for the tuition. Anyway, I just couldn't swing getting a house and supporting them without any allowances at all. So that accounted for that separation.

FRANCESCA MILLS: We had joined the grou- the Service grou- in Washington who referred to themselves and each other as the...what was it? The only time we saw each other was over the meat counter or someplace like that, in the supermarket. "Genteel poverty" was how we referred to ourselves.

SHELDON MILLS: This was a later period. The Chilean separation. Pearl Harbor came along, and our staff under Claude Bowers was Ellis Briggs; Brooks, the Commercial Attach#; later Don Heath, who succeeded Ellis Briggs; Cecil Lyon; myself; and two or three others. We all volunteered to be used for military service or whatever was most useful.

Library of Congress

We hadn't done any recruiting in the Foreign Service for several years because of the Depression. At that time, word came back, "Don't be silly. You are needed where you are." I felt a little badly being about as far from the War as I could be in Chile. A request came through for volunteers for the War Zone, and I volunteered. I had been sent to Washington to be trained on the Black List, and when I was there, I got a letter from Betty Hazelton. Norris and I had been at Harvard the same year. He went to Calcutta and then to New Delhi. She accompanied him. Of course, I went to Chile. Their child became very ill with bubonic or something terrible. She brought him back to the States. I wrote to her at Christmastime and said, "I'm about ready for transfer." I'd been there nearly three years. Norris had had the same sort of economic training I had had. (I wrote) "Why don't you ask him to apply for Chile?" Along came a telegram...she was out in Berkeley living with a couple of aunts..."Shelly, damn you! Don't tell me! Tell Cordell! Help?" (laughs)

At any rate, there came a telegram asking for volunteers for the War Zone, and I volunteered. By a fluke, we changed posts. He (Hazelton) went to Chile, and I went to New Delhi. That's how we separated, (Francesca and I).Q (Jewell): They wouldn't pay and they wouldn't let you go?

SHELDON MILLS: No. They wouldn't give transportation, because it was in such short supply and they wouldn't guarantee housing.

FRANCESCA MILLS: First, they said the officer could come, but no children.

Q (Jewell): What were you supposed to do with your children?

SHELDON MILLS: They allowed a certain separate maintenance allowance then and maybe they do now, but it started at that time. It wasn't very much. Maybe \$150 a month or something like that, but anyway that helped a bit. And Francesca just went to Oregon while I went on to India.

FRANCESCA MILLS: And I started driving the school bus. (Laughs)

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: To go back a bit, we have a document for you. Would you... oh, wait, wait, dear, you're tied in, too (with the microphone)...on the table there.

Q (Jewell): There's a little microphone in here that Guido and I are using.

SHELDON MILLS: This is the American Foreign Service Journal of fifty years ago this month. In it is an article by Francesca called "Winter Housekeeping in Romania." I had a copy xeroxed for you.

Q (Jewell): Oh, thank you.

SHELDON MILLS: Here's the original. There's also...I don't want you to read it now, but go over to...what is it?...page 55 or something.

FRANCESCA MILLS: It gives an idea of the quantities of food that we used to take in.

Q (Jewell): "Tomatoes for bouillon, 150 kilos." Now where did these come from?

SHELDON MILLS: Well, this explains it. Peddlers would come around or we'd go to the market, buy it by the piece.

Q (Guido): See the photograph as well as the xerox copy of the...?

Q (Jewell): Not quite as well, no.

SHELDON MILLS: Then, the next page is another one of our...where a Gypsy peddler...and there they are...

Q (Jewell): So, you bought vegetables from a Gypsy peddler? SHELDON MILLS: *With our little children.*

Q (Jewell): Oh, look at that. Aren't they sweet?

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: We made a couple of copies for a couple of our daughters.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Here's another one.

Q (Jewell): So, this is when you'd been in Romania for awhile?

FRANCESCA MILLS: We'd been there...

Q (Jewell): Where the twins were born?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. They were born almost before we got there! And someone said that we were a little like Joseph and Mary looking for a stable. (laughs)

Q (Jewell): Then you mentioned the other day that they were born at home.

FRANCESCA MILLS: In French.

SHELDON MILLS: In French with a Polish mid-wife and a Romanian obstetrician.

Q (Jewell): Isn't that something! They were born internationally then!

FRANCESCA MILLS: Oh, yes.

SHELDON MILLS: And the point is, because of their location, they only heard one heartbeat, and no one knew they were going to be twins.

Q (Guido): Oh, really?

SHELDON MILLS: Francesca thought it was going to be an elephant! (laughs)

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, when the first twin was born, the Polish mid-wife rushed out into the kitchen and asked for rum for me. They drink very strong tea with very strong rum. Nobody thought anything of it. Finally, the Polish mid-wife saw this bottle of rum. There

Library of Congress

were bottles about that big that they used to serve with tea, and she said, "Oh, does she need it?" We had an English-speaking Romanian girl helping us in the house at the time and she was able to translate. The midwife said, "Oh, such a reflection on my profession. I didn't know it was twins, and there's going to be another one."

Q (Jewell): And that was the first you knew?

FRANCESCA MILLS: That was the first for sure. They didn't take ex-rays or anything like that in those days.

SHELDON MILLS: However, it was in Romania that they had a tradition that their twins, one would always die.

Q (Guido): Oh?

Q (Jewell): As in so many of the Third World countries.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes. Also, when our girls were young, they were...although they had dark eyes...they had blond hair. It darkened as time went on, but there was a danger there that blond children might be stolen by the Gypsies and made into beggars. They would be more appealing beggars. We had this Florica, who had been born in Detroit and had come back during the Depression.

FRANCESCA MILLS: She was born in Romania.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, born in Romania, but was taken to Detroit and then they came back. This was before any Social Security.

Q (Jewell): I was going to ask you how you could find a Romanian servant that spoke English.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, Shelly wrote to the Consul General Foy Kohler.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: Kohler was in charge at that time. Elbridge Durbrow had been there, but he had been transferred to Moscow, and Foy was in charge. No, Mr. Clum was in charge. Foy was a vice consul there. And this girl had come in looking for work. They lived up in Transylvania. But it was the Depression, and she wanted work. And Foy lined her up.

So, when we arrived in Romania...of course, in those days you had to get your furniture and then you had to hunt for a place to live...as it is still in a few places in the Foreign Service. Before we knew it, almost immediately Florica arrived, and we hired her. We were staying at the Grand Hotel Lafayette, and it was our first experience of Europe. We were all wide-eyed. It seemed quite different, quite exotic, quite different from Latin America, which is transferred Spain, I suppose.

FRANCESCA MILLS: The changing of the guard under the hotel window...

SHELDON MILLS: ...just fascinated our daughter, Sheila. She would march up and down as they would march up and down.

FRANCESCA MILLS: She was two years old.

Q (Guido): Was this under King Carol?

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, this was under King Carol. He had broken with his wife. Lupescu was his mistress then.

FRANCESCA MILLS: He was rooming with Lupescu at the moment, and we discovered after we'd found a house and were moving into it, that Lupescu lived just about a block from us.

SHELDON MILLS: Ah...dear...a little farther than that, but anyway in the neighborhood. It was called Parco Filipescu. Romanian is a language which is largely Latin. It still has the conjugations, declensions of the nouns, the various nominative, genitive, etc.

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: And the word endings, when declining a noun, are just like the ancient Latin. The first time in my life that I was glad I had been obliged to study Latin.

Q (Guido): This was before the Department gave any language training?

SHELDON MILLS: That's right. You had to do it on your own. At my first post, which was Bolivia, I found a Bolivian with the un-Bolivian name of Teddy Hartman, and I hired him at a dollar a lesson, the equivalent in bolivianos, and he'd come two days a week. I would work on the verbs and everything else.

Q (Guido): You had no Spanish before you went?

SHELDON MILLS: No. I had a pretty good knowledge of French for reading. In fact, we had to offer a foreign language then, and I offered French.

Q (Guido): So, they sent you to a Spanish-speaking country, just as they do now?

SHELDON MILLS: Well, my French wasn't good enough. I was not among those elite who went to the Ecole de Science Politique as so many of my colleagues had been, so I hadn't had a chance to use French. And I never have had a chance to use French.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, you used it quite a good deal. We did, I would say.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, we did, in Romania. In all posts, we've used it some.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Because this was the polite, social language in Romania, and German was the commercial language. If you'd go into a shop, any kind of shop, and stumbled over the syllable of the first word, they would immediately switch to German.

SHELDON MILLS: French was also the snobbish language.

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: Oh, yes. I was riding in the streetcar in Bucharest one day, and there were two Romanian women sitting in front of me, just chattering in Romanian. We came to an intersection, and the car stopped. And they stopped (speaking in Romanian)...

SHELDON MILLS: They went into French.

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...and they went into French. It was a snob language. People who could afford to send their children to the first school would be a French school, just for snobbism.

SHELDON MILLS: Well, when we arrived...of course, in Romania, Foy met us at the Gara de Nord, and we went to the Hotel Grand Lafayette. We had a Minister, and George Wadsworth was the First Secretary...you know his name. The first Sunday we were there, George kindly sent his driver with his car to take us on a drive. There was, outside the city, what was called the Baneasa Woods. We went out there, going down a lane lined with poplars, I guess, and here came a Gypsy, playing his heart out on a violin...all to himself. Then, later, although we couldn't afford to do it very often, once or twice we went to a restaurant there where they had a Gypsy orchestra.

FRANCESCA MILLS: And they played the Pipes of Pan. It was our favorite. The orchestra would stop. There'd be silence. And then, the nightingales would sing in the woods. (laughs) It really was very romantic.

Q (Jewell): What year was this?

SHELDON MILLS: We went there from 1934 and were there until 1939. I suppose that World War II was gathering. Of course, it was Depression. You'll notice an ad here that a Foreign Service officer could go to the Hotel Powhatan for three dollars a night and to the Mayflower for four dollars a night minus a diplomatic discount.

Q (Jewell): (laughs) Oh, here it is...the Powhatan Hotel.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: Anyway, our money went further, and the exchange was helpful, so we did have help there. We had Romanian help because it was cheaper. And those who had more money would get French or German-speaking people. You'd get German women from Transylvania, and French would be reduced middle class people, you see. We learned Romanian...Francesca very well. My job the first year was the Visa Section.

FRANCESCA MILLS: With small children, you learn (languages) very quickly.

SHELDON MILLS: Then, as an experiment, they united the Consulate, consulates and legations in three countries...in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Romania...maybe it wasn't Czechoslovakia. Maybe it was Hungary. I had been a Third Secretary in Panama, but FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) thought he was going to take in the pretensions of the pre-Rogers Act diplomats.

Q (Guido): They were separate services?

SHELDON MILLS: The services joined in the Rogers Act of 1924, and I entered in 1928. However, there was a feeling then, particularly among the pre-Rogers Act diplomats, that these consuls had to be tolerated. They weren't quite the real stuff, and I don't think that has entirely died in the Service now. Some people feel that way now, but there's a sort of chip on your shoulder among the consular officers and a sort of feeling of superiority particularly among the political officers still.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Absolutely, and particularly among some of the senior citizens in those groups. We get together with some of them from the early years in the Service, and they will get you by the arm and take you off in a corner and say, "Wasn't it wonderful when we were there?"

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: My first post was Vice Consul in La Paz. My second post was Third Secretary in Panama, and, of course, a lot of my colleagues congratulated me. "You've now made it. You're now a big diplomat."

Q (Jewell): 1929 you started, before the Crash? After the Crash?

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, before the Crash. I entered in the career Foreign Service, I think, on October something, 1928, and I was first assigned to the Foreign Service School. Then I was assigned because they were lacking one person, and instead of going to the field immediately, I was assigned to the Visa Section.

Q (Guido): In Washington?

SHELDON MILLS: In Washington. It was down in the basement of the old State Department. It was headed by Monnett Davis, and John Farr Simmons was number two...you've heard their names.

Q (Guido): I remember John Farr Simmons' name, yes.

SHELDON MILLS: He later was Ambassador to Salvador, Ecuador, and then he was Chief of Protocol for a number of years. At any rate, here came this assignment to Bolivia. In Panama, I was assigned there because we decided to have a Mutual Claims Commission...claims of the U.S. against the Panamanians and claims of the Panamanians against the U.S. And they decided that for the first time, instead of sending lawyers down from Washington, they'd use the staff in the preliminary work. For my first six months I went through the Archives in Panama, which didn't start until 1904 when Panama became an independent country, and then, the Archives of Panama with a secretary dictating, translating and dictating documents that I thought would be useful. Later, a lawyer came down who took it up using this material. I guess that's how I happened to go to Panama at that time.

Library of Congress

Q (Jewell): And then you came back to get married?

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, I came back.

FRANCESCA MILLS: I think another reason that he had remained there was he was determined that he was going to be able to support me. (laughs) He didn't dare ask...have me marry him until...

SHELDON MILLS: Well, we were in college together, in Reed College in Oregon.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Collegiately engaged to other people.

SHELDON MILLS: When I was in Washington, Francesca graduated and went back to New York and then came down to Washington to visit with a brother and sister-in-law of mine, who were living in Washington then. And, of course, I was glad to see her and I took her out. Each of our previous romances had blown up with time and separation. Anyway, I thought she was pretty nice, and I went off to Bolivia. And George Butler and Joseph P. McGurk were officers together and said, "So, you are going to Bolivia." And one of them...I think Joe McGurk... had been there. He said, "Now, don't marry a Bolivian. When their necks begin to look white, ask for a transfer." (laughs) Shows how our prejudices were in those days. Well, of course, Bolivia...Have you served in Bolivia?

Q (Guido): No, we've never been there.

SHELDON MILLS: It and Ecuador are the most Indian countries, I suppose. I don't know about Central America, but when we were there, about 50 percent of the Bolivians were pure Indian, about 40 percent were Cholos or mixed, and about 10 percent wore European clothing. Anyway, that's nothing against them. In fact, they have pure Indian blood. Still, it does show that we have prejudices.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Some of them, I think, are the most captivating I've ever seen.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: Yes.

FRANCESCA MILLS: I don't see how you could resist them.

Q (Guido): Apparently he did.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes.

SHELDON MILLS: I did, and Francesca wrote me a “thank you” letter for having shown her around Washington, so I began to think about her. And so I wrote her a letter saying that, “I think that next year I may be granted home leave”..(at my own expense, of course, because they didn't pay for home leave then)... “and if I come to Portland and ask you to marry me, might you say 'yes'?” (laughs)

FRANCESCA MILLS: I asked you if the back door and front door were open. (laughs)

SHELDON MILLS: Well, she just hooted.

FRANCESCA MILLS: I laughed hysterically. My mother and father were watching me read this letter, because I was flying out from a cold, winter, wet night in Portland, and when I got all through, I said, “Mother, this is hilarious! I think he's asking me to marry him!” Mother was horrified. She said, “This is a very serious letter. A great deal of thought has gone into that and it's not anything to be laughed at.” Well, I went to my room and reread it, but I still thought it was a joke, because we had known each other, you know, but not romantically at all. We'd never had a date.

SHELDON MILLS: I always referred to her as a “picture bride.”

Q (Guido): You were saying earlier that you were hoping to be earning enough salary so that you could get married. Do you think still in the late twenties most of the Foreign Service were independently wealthy?

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: No, not the newcomers. A few were, but most of them weren't and, of course, after the Depression, those that thought they were well-off were less well-off. You mentioned Mrs. Horace Smith. Horace and I went to Crawfords and studied together. Then he couldn't swing it financially. He went off to New York and got a job as a runner for one of the banks. Each day, five days a week, I would write up my notes of the two hours at Crawfords and I'd mail him a copy. And then he came down before the...well, I think he got a little better grade than I did!

Q (Jewell): From your notes?

SHELDON MILLS: My notes! (laughs) I drilled him. We walked up and down in the Washington Spring before the Orals. There was a girl named Ruth Stoddard, who lived on R Street in one of those nice, brownstone houses. I've forgotten whether her father was a realtor, but he was fairly well off. And I think she wanted to marry a Foreign Service officer. Horace and I were both invited to her house for Sunday dinner, suppers, a time or two, and then I dropped out. Horace kept on. And he married her. They had a great, fine wedding at Bethlehem Chapel at the Washington Cathedral. The Cathedral wasn't completed then, of course. Horace came from Xenia, Ohio, and he was assigned to China as a language student.

In those days, when you went to the field, you paid yourself. You drew a draft on the Secretary of the Treasury for your expenditures, and then you submitted an account current. And Horace got as far as Xenia and he sent me a telegram, "How do you draw a draft?" (laughs) Because he'd run out of money, he wanted to collect a few days' salary that he'd accumulated, you see. Well, he went on and actually our paths really never crossed after that.

Q (Jewell): You went in different directions.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: I went to Latin America and he went to China, and I think that his wife, as many of the American wives were sent home from China during the War, I think they had this long separation. Really broke up a lot of marriages in the Foreign Service at that time. And I never really knew his second wife.

About 1963, there was a conference at what was then called State University of Pennsylvania on the "Role of the American Ambassador as an Institution." A lot of retired ambassadors were invited and a few active ones, and I met Horace there and his present widow. That's the only time we met, but he had been Ambassador to Cambodia, was it? I think so.

FRANCESCA MILLS: His daughter and our oldest daughter were in the same class at Swarthmore.

SHELDON MILLS: Oh, yes. At Swarthmore. So, that was a slight contact. Well, you better ask questions. I'm just bubbling along.

Q (Jewell): Guido?

Q (Guido): Going back to those days in the late twenties and thirties, did the Department pay for transportation for wives and family...?

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, they hadn't been doing it for very long. When I arrived in Bolivia...

Q (Guido): ...because I do recall that there was a time when the officer's way was paid, but not the family...that was earlier.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, that was going to India.

SHELDON MILLS: When I arrived in Bolivia, there was no Minister. There'd been a Minister named Kaufman, who was a wealthy man, who'd been making so much money on the Stock Exchange...on that Stock Exchange of the twenties...that money meant nothing.

Library of Congress

Bolivians would go home with bottles of champagne, boxes of cigars under their arms, and kept asking, "When are you going to send another millionaire Minister?"

SHELDON MILLS: ...1927 or maybe early '28, a man called Jack Martin, who had been First Secretary in Chile, was assigned up there temporarily. The Department paid his way up, but refused to pay the way up of his wife and children. His wife was Chilean born. He was so angry that he left the Service. But by the time I got there, they did pay for families. Maybe his experience jogged them a bit.

Q (Guido): But you did say that your home leave would not have been paid, your transportation?

SHELDON MILLS: I didn't get a home leave paid until about 1939, and that was on transfer. You could sometimes work it. For instance, when I transferred from Chile to India, I got a month's leave, instead of two months, en route. Then, coming back, let's see...after India...of course, I came back to the Department. They didn't pay my way home, but they paid my way as far as Washington.

Q (Jewell): Speaking of India, there must have been a large contrast between the India that you knew and the India that was in that Washington Post article.

SHELDON MILLS: Oh, yes. Oh, I must give that to you to take it back to Bob. Yes. Before the War, the British did not allow foreign representatives in New Delhi, except what we called the Four Consuls General. They were from Tibet, Nepal, Iran, and Afghanistan. The British missions in those countries were not under the Foreign Office, but under the Government of India, who sent the Ministers there. The War came along. We had a Consul General in Calcutta, and consulates in Bombay, Madras, and Karachi. As we got into the War, they would allow our Consul General from Calcutta to visit New Delhi maybe for two weeks, but they wouldn't allow him to establish residence.

Library of Congress

Well, it just became too difficult to carry on through London everything that we had to do...with Lend Lease and everything else...with the Indians. So, they agreed that we could have an office in New Delhi, but we would not use any normal diplomatic titles, so it would not prejudice the question of eventual independence either way.

First, we sent a man called Tom Wilson, who had been Consul General in Calcutta. He established an office, and that's when Norris Hazelton went up. He was on the Economic side and a man named Berry on the Political side. Wilson was called American Commissioner. Well then, FDR had established at the Vatican the Office of the Personal Representative of the President of the United States of America.

Q (Guido): I remember that.

SHELDON MILLS: A man named Taylor, I think, was the first American representative with that title. We decided to use that title in India. So, we first sent a man...I forget his name...who became the first Secretary of Defense when they united the three services. He stayed in India about three months, didn't solve any problems, so they decided to send a professional. They sent William Philips, who was a professional and had been Ambassador to Italy.

He was in India about three months and he wrote two letters to FDR urging FDR to bring pressure on the British Government to promise India its independence after the War, as a War measure to get the Indians to support the War effort. The British Government of India was up in arms and asked London to declare Mr. Philips "persona non grata." You see, this leaked to Drew Pearson and it was published... that's how they knew about it. Well, Mr. Philips went home on leave and he never came back. Instead, he went to London as the Head of OSS (Office of Strategic Services).

When I was sent to India, a man named Wallace Murray, who was then head of the Near Eastern Division, asked me if I could find out where the leak occurred. Well, I never did.

Library of Congress

It wasn't in New Delhi. I think it was in the White House itself, and maybe that's come out in the interval. Here we had an Office of the Representative of the President of the United States of America in India without a representative. George Merrill was the Officer-in-Charge, and that was the case for two years. So, Mr. Philips was my boss for two years, and I never met him. Later, his son was in the Department...Christopher Philips.

Well, when I arrived, I said to George, "What about this? What is our status? Are we diplomatic or aren't we?" He said, "Well, we're quasi-diplomatic." I said, "That means we only have to be half as polite and half as dull as if we were full diplomats." (laughs)

But here we had a country...India takes its Census in the years ending in 1, and I arrived in 1943, December, and the last Census was 1941. It was something over 400 million in undivided India. Here we had, in this little office, four FSOs. I used to say we had one to make friends with each million Indians. Of course, we had larger offices in Calcutta and Bombay, not in Karachi. Also, we had in Bombay a War Shipping Office and we had a Lend Lease Office, which was much larger than we were in New Delhi.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Did you have anything in Madras?

SHELDON MILLS: Why, yes, we had a Consul there and maybe one or two vice consuls. Also, we had in New Delhi, OWI, (Office of War Information), a precursor of cultural and...

Q (Guido): USIA, (United States Information Agency).

SHELDON MILLS: USIA.

Q (Guido): I know there was concern here that the Indian Independence Movement would try to get some help from the Japanese when they were so close by in Burma. Do you think that was a concern you were covering up?

SHELDON MILLS: By the time I had arrived, the Japanese had bombed the coast...the sea...they'd taken over Burma. They'd bombed India. There was a fear that they might

Library of Congress

come in. Also, they captured in Burma a lot of Indian officers, soldiers, and they organized those who were willing to be so organized into an Indian National Army. The idea was that these people would win India's independence with the help of the Japanese. The British Government had locked up most of the Congress Party members...Nehru, Gandhi. About the only important leader who wasn't locked up was a man called Rajagopalachari, all one name. We had to work on that one! That was murder!

Q (Jewell): And you can still say it. (laughs)

SHELDON MILLS: We learned it well. (laughs)

Q (Jewell): You learned it well. (laughs)

SHELDON MILLS: But that was a very interesting period. Gradually, we added a little staff. Then, I went back to India on a second tour by a sort of fluke.

FRANCESCA MILLS: From Brazil, wasn't it?

SHELDON MILLS: After India, I went to the Department, and after the Department nearly five years, I was assigned as Minister Counselor to Rio. I was there about two years. Francesca had gone to the States, because our twins were graduating from private school in Delaware and they'd taken no steps at all toward going to college. They thought they'd like to be airline hostesses. And so, she rushed up to the States, and we got them each into sort of junior colleges at that time. Later, they went to others. But she heard word in the Department that I was to go back to India again.

FRANCESCA MILLS: And I said, "He's already been there!"

SHELDON MILLS: Yes. (laughs) Well, she was delighted.

FRANCESCA MILLS: I was delighted, because I had always wanted to go to India. I was satisfied, happy, at the other (posts), but I had always wanted to go to India, because one

Library of Congress

of the books that I had learned to read from a very small child was *The Crescent Moon* by Rabindranath Tagore and I loved that book. There was a frontispiece with a picture of the gentleman, long white beard, and he looked so benign. My grandparents had all died long before I was born, so he became my grandfather image, you know, and so, when we landed in India, Shelly had warned me about all the unpleasant things that I might meet...the poverty, the whole bit. I was prepared to drop back on my heels and take it, because it was India and that's where I wanted to be. I got off the plane in India and I never regretted a minute of it. I loved it.

SHELDON MILLS: There's an Indian smell that's this burning cow dung that they use, which has a certain pungency, not unpleasant. And once you get off a plane in India, that's the smell.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Just like a circus.

Q (Guido): Did you read the article from the Post on the present way families live in (India)?

SHELDON MILLS: I don't think she has, but I have.

Q (Guido): It must have been quite a contrast from your second stay.

SHELDON MILLS: Well...

Q (Guido): Or was it?

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, although the article indicates that it's mostly support personnel and the Ambassador who live in the Golden Ghetto. We took over the Bahawalpur House. There are some quite large houses, and when Lady Willinden was a Vicereine, she wanted to have a little court, so she had a tot of Indian princes build little palaces in New Delhi. These were taken over in World War II by the Government of India, and they rented

Library of Congress

to us the Bahawalpur House, which later, with Lend Lease funds, we purchased. It was our office both times.

The first time I was there, I lived in quarters which had been Mr. Philips', but he wasn't there. And then, in a cottage on the grounds which had been built for the Prime Minister when he came to pay court to Lady Willinden and her other Vicereines. Also, we were able to rent a number of quite nice houses on Rattendon Road in New Delhi. One of those was the Ambassador's Residence when I went back to India... first, Chester Bowles for a few months, and then George Allen. But there were others there. Also, we had bought quite a large group of apartments across from Bahawalpur House, where a number of people lived, but they were living among Indians. The building of this compound started when I was there on my second tour and...

Q (Jewell): ...so you knew it.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes. Then we visited it when we were in Afghanistan when it was nearly completed. But the quarters...there is quite a bit of difference living, everyone living, in a compound. Of course, each time I lived in the Bahawalpur House, and the second time, when I was Minister Counselor, I was the only one there. It meant that I was the only officer on duty all the time, because I was right there. (laughs)

Q (Jewell): So you were really DCM?

SHELDON MILLS: I was DCM for...

Q (Jewell): ...for Mr. Bowles.

SHELDON MILLS: ...for Mrs. Bowles, and then for Kitty Allen. (laughs)

Q (Jewell): Then you had a lot to help carry her?

SHELDON MILLS: Well, she carried herself pretty well.

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: She'd just say, "Thank you very much," you know.

SHELDON MILLS: She was very...

Q (Jewell): At least she said that...nice. (laughs)

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes.

SHELDON MILLS: Well, she was quite a nice person.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, she was.

SHELDON MILLS: Now, Mr. Bowles had an infinite capacity to believe what he wanted to believe.

Q (Jewell): Like our present leader? (laugh)

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, very much.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, little things, for example. Chester Bowles said that his family had been well all the time they were in India. They had never had an ill day and so forth. At that time, at that very moment in fact, Steb (Dorothy Stebbins Bowles), his wife, and one of his younger children were in bed with...what was it?

SHELDON MILLS: Pneumonia or some sort of respiratory disease.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. And they were out of school all the time, because of infected eyes. The wind blowing the dirty dust blinded them temporarily.

SHELDON MILLS: In a way, Indians didn't need an ambassador in Washington as long as Chester Bowles was in New Delhi. (laughs)

Q (Jewell): He became more Indian than the Indians, right?

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: And she did too. She wore a sari...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...and sandals.

SHELDON MILLS: ...and sandals. She rode a bicycle. She had a little car. Articles in the United States never mentioned that she had her own little car, but she used that, too. But she was a nice person.

FRANCESCA MILLS: She was. She really was. I liked her very much.

SHELDON MILLS: He had gifts, but his gifts were not, in my opinion, quite what were called for in an American Ambassador. Everyone accuses ambassadors or a lot of them of becoming too "pro" the country that they're in. That's a standard charge if you don't like what an ambassador does: "Well, he's become too pro-Israeli, too pro-Arab, too pro-Italian, too pro-Romanian" or whatever it is. There are degrees though. I think that it's one thing to cultivate popularity at your post and another to really forget who you're working for.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Another trifling: the Bowles children also were swayed very easily to the Indian point of view with regard to any subject whatsoever. Their oldest daughter was then seventeen. Cindy (Cynthia) Bowles was very concerned about the poverty in all of India, and that extended into their servants' compound and everywhere around the house. When the summer heat began to descend upon us and the temperature varied between 95 degrees in the daytime to 116 degrees in the afternoon, she refused to turn on the ceiling fan...

SHELDON MILLS: ...because the servants didn't have any.

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...because they didn't have ceiling fans.

SHELDON MILLS: She wouldn't take a Coca Cola unless a servant would have a Coca Cola, too.

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, that was served to the servant also.

Q (Jewell): This must have been totally baffling to the Indians.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, it was. Cindy went to visit in the village of one of the servants, the head bearer at the Residence. And she was bitten by some various bugs, and the bites got infected.

SHELDON MILLS: She wouldn't go home when her parents left.

FRANCESCA MILLS: No, she stayed. One day, the phone rang and it was for me. It was the Indian bearer, and he asked me if I had seen Cindy lately. And I said, "No, what was the trouble?" He said, "I had to call you, because Cindy has been visiting in my village and that is not a place for her to visit." And he said, "She has infected bites all over her arms and legs, but she will not do anything about it. And I'm worried." So I said, "Have you spoken to her about it?" He said, "Yes, and she says that she's all right. She's going to do as she likes." "Well," I said, "You know, she has a great confidence in consulting Indian doctors." He was the doctor assigned to Legation there, and I said, "Maybe I can persuade her to see one of them that she knows, someone that she really knows." He said, "Please do, because she should not be in my village."

SHELDON MILLS: This is the servant speaking to you.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. So, I got hold of Cindy, and she said she was all right. The bites were clearing up and they didn't bother her and "bugger off", as they say nowadays.

SHELDON MILLS: Eventually, she went home, which was a great relief to us.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. I finally got hold of...I can't remember her name now... she was...

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: She came in Mr. Bowles' entourage.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, and this woman...There was an Indian doctor who was the Health Department something-or-other...an official position.

SHELDON MILLS: She was the Minister of Health of the State of Delhi.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, that's right. Then I got the Minister of Health from Delhi, and she...I invited them both to tea...and the two doctors took one look at Cindy and said, "My dear child, where have you been?" And that brought it out into the light. I took her home afterwards and I took the doctors home. The doctors said, "Oh, she should never be allowed to stay here alone. These babies don't know anything about health."

Q (Guido): Did she accept it from the Indian doctors?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, she did.

Q (Jewell): But that must have been difficult for you to have her there, because she really had no status, she had no...

FRANCESCA MILLS: It was very difficult from the very beginning. Steb called me over to her house before the family left...

SHELDON MILLS: Steb is Mrs. Bowles.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, and she said, "I'm asking you a difficult thing, but I would be eternally grateful if you could give me some help on it. Cindy will not leave! She will not go with us!"

Q (Jewell): How old was Cindy at that time?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Seventeen.

Library of Congress

Q (Jewell): Oh, she was young then.

SHELDON MILLS: Now, from another angle, this is sort of interesting. I was sent to India to do economic work.

Q (Jewell): Was this the first time or the second time?

SHELDON MILLS: The first time. There was a man called Clayton Lane, who was Economic Counselor, and he became ill and eventually he had to leave because of his illness. So, I became the Economic Officer. Well, I heard that there was what was called an Economic Seminar that had been organized by the Economic Advisor of the Government of India...a man called Sir Theodore Gregory from the London School of Economics. I asked if they would let me join. Well, they debated it and they agreed that I could join. And so, I attended their meetings. Papers would be read. And these young Indian economists...well, not so young..would...

FRANCESCA MILLS: Some had beards.

SHELDON MILLS: ...asked me to criticize their papers, which meant to praise them, of course. I decided to entertain them. This was before Partition of India into India and Pakistan. They were both Hindus and Moslems, and the question of food came up. You have a buffet and you have a vegetarian buffet and you have one with, not beef, but you might have lamb. The Moslems cannot eat pork and most Hindus will not eat meat. Some will eat lamb, but it depends upon their Caste.

FRANCESCA MILLS: They eat chicken.

SHELDON MILLS: Some will eat chicken. Some are total vegetarians. At any rate, I gave this party at the Bahawalpur House for them, and then I was accepted. This was very valuable. When I went back to India for the second time, with Independence these people had moved into higher positions in government, and there were maybe about sixty people,

Library of Congress

maybe twenty of them had gone to Pakistan, but there were about forty left, a great many of them in New Delhi. And those were very valuable contacts.

India is a wonderful country for an American. It was then, for the reason that the Government of India was carried on in English. There is a good book written by some Englishman or some educated Indian on almost every phase of India - music, dance, mythology, handwriting, almost anything you can think of. There's a good book, and you don't have to struggle through an imperfectly understood language to try to get it.

FRANCESCA MILLS: They even have rules for preparation of a bride.

Q (Guido): And they have a book in English on that too?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes.

Q (Jewell): A book in English on the rules for preparation of a bride? Is this ... well, they change saris two or three times?

FRANCESCA MILLS: It's not only that, but it's what to put on her skin.

Q (Jewell): Herbs? Oils?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. Oils and creams. Her feet...the soles of their feet... are painted, you know, red...

Q (Jewell): ...with henna?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. And how that must be done, you know, like a routine.

Q (Jewell): Did you get that book?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: We've given it to one of our granddaughters now. We don't have it now. Our second tour...in some ways, doors opened for us by our twin daughters.

Q (Guido): How old were they?

FRANCESCA MILLS: They were eighteen. They had their nineteenth birthday there.

SHELDON MILLS: They decided to take a year off from college for the Indian experience. And they did. They went with us. I came home on leave. It was the second time. The first time, I guess, I was due leave and they said, "Hurry up and take your leave later." So, I hurried from Rio to New Delhi with no leave at all. At any rate, we got leave the next year, and at that time we asked the twins if they would come back with us. They were only too delighted. For one thing, one of the last great marriages between two princely houses took place while we were there.

FRANCESCA MILLS: The bride was a friend of the twins.

Q (Jewell): Oh, how wonderful for you!

SHELDON MILLS: Although our Ambassador, George Allen, and his wife were invited, I had the title of Minister, but would not have been invited if it wasn't for this friendship of the twins. They wanted the twins, and we had to take them. So, we saw all the phases of this marriage...the bridegroom coming on a white horse...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...with gold trappings...

SHELDON MILLS: ...getting out, getting into an open Cadillac and driving the first...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...a bright, bright yellow Cadillac convertible.

Q (Jewell): From the horse to the car?

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: That was concession to the 1900's.

SHELDON MILLS: His father-in-law-to-be was Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army at that time. They had in the garden a sort of "shamiana" (tent).

SHELDON MILLS: These Indian princes were there...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...including this little seven-year-old...

SHELDON MILLS: ...the seven-year-old son of the Maharajah of Jaipur.

FRANCESCA MILLS: This little fellow was dressed in a jodhpur type thing made of light green and silver brocade. He had a little stand-up collar, you know, and around his neck he had a necklace of matched emeralds...

Q (Jewell): ...to match his little green suit!

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes. He was about this high and he had a gold belt from which hung a dagger about this long with gold decoration...

SHELDON MILLS: ...filigree.

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...filigree, yes, on the scabbard...SHELDON MILLS: ...and jewels...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...oh, yes, jewels, of course.

SHELDON MILLS: It was very interesting, because they had the sacred fire, and they sit on big poufs or cushions. First, the friends of the bride tease the groom...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...in song...

SHELDON MILLS: ...in song, yes.

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: They sang this thing and actually it was like a Greek chorus. They'd sing awhile and then they'd talk awhile. Then they'd sit...

SHELDON MILLS: ...and go around...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...with no apparent signal. They would just get up and...

SHELDON MILLS: ...go around the sacred fire. It goes on and on, because the marriage is not considered complete until their stars are in the right...

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...horoscopes.

SHELDON MILLS: The horoscopes show the most propitious time. We were there from, say, about eight o'clock until about one o'clock, but the marriage went on until about three o'clock, because that's when the horoscopes were right. There was a bar in the house, and people would go back and get a whiskey and soda, come back and watch for awhile.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Then they'd get bored and go in and have something to eat and drink.

Q (Jewell): How many thousands or hundreds of people were there?

FRANCESCA MILLS: I don't suppose there were more than sixty or seventy.

Q (Jewell): Oh, it was small?

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes.

SHELDON MILLS: And, of course, all the trees were decorated with colored lights.

Q (Guido): You were fortunate in your daughters' getting you an invitation.

Q (Jewell): I envisioned a cast of thousands.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: No, it was...we felt very exclusive.Q (Jewell): You were among the elite.

FRANCESCA MILLS: And our girls had been invited over there beforehand to see her saris. The bride wore two saris, one orange and one red, one on top of the other, because her fiancé, the groom, came from one province, and she was from another, and so they had...

SHELDON MILLS: They were princely states.

FRANCESCA MILLS: ...two colors.

Q (Guido): This was one of the last of the really...

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, yes.

SHELDON MILLS: That's what they said at the time. Of course, we haven't been there since. Maybe there have been more since then but the informality of it (was surprising). For instance, it was cold. It was in December.

FRANCESCA MILLS: February.

SHELDON MILLS: February. And the Maharajah of Jaipur...

Q (Jewell): How do they keep warm in those saris when it's that cold?

FRANCESCA MILLS: It's their pride, I think. Nothing else. (laughs)

SHELDON MILLS: The Maharajah of Jaipur came and he said to the Brahman priest, "Hurry up!"

FRANCESCA MILLS: "Get on with this ceremony. The bride's going to die of pneumonia!"

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: I mean, the informality towards their priests is quite surprising. Yes, they have respect for their priests, but they are hired men, in a way.

Q (Jewell): Amid all these elegant trappings and everything, you had this informality.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes.

Q (Jewell): People were wandering in and out to eat and not eat. It's interesting.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes. So, that was a highlight.

Well, somehow we don't have anything quite as interesting from the Latin American experiences. It was interesting. I arrived in La Paz in 1929, went down by a Grace boat. First time I'd been on an ocean liner. I was quite surprised, the first morning out, I heard someone yelling, "Bastard! Bastard!" And I thought, "Golly, these are sort of rough speaking people." They were called the Bath Steward. (laughs) Because in those days, except for the bridal suite, you didn't have a bath. There was a bathroom. There was a Bath Steward who would draw your bath.

FRANCESCA MILLS: It was down at the end of the longest corridor.

SHELDON MILLS: Anyway, I arrived and got off in Peru while the vessel was there and went up to Lima. Ellis Briggs...

FRANCESCA MILLS: You didn't go in a basket though, did you?

SHELDON MILLS: No, that was later. Ellis Briggs and Sam Reber were young Secretaries there, and they introduced me to the Ambassador.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Shelly, excuse me, Sam Reber was the name we were trying to think of for several days last week. He's the one who had a foreign wife.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: We had as an Ambassador...I can look him up...Alexander something (Moore), who had been Ambassador to Spain... [Alexander Pollock Moore, ambassador to Spain 1923-25.]

FRANCESCA MILLS: Not Kurt?

SHELDON MILLS: No, he was the one that told the Queen of Spain she was almost as pretty as Lillian Russel, who was his girlfriend. Anyway, I was ushered into his bedroom in the Lima Embassy, because the Chancery was two rooms at the entrance and the rest was the Residence. And he was in bed at Noon, a Vicuna rug over him, and he said, "So, you're going to Bolivia! What have you done?" (laughing)

FRANCESCA MILLS: That's one way to raise your spirit.

Q (Jewell): We're not going to leave you in a basket.

SHELDON MILLS: Then we went to the Port of Mollendo, and they didn't have a place where the boat could moor, but little boats came out and you went down the ladder. Then, when the waves were just right, you jumped into this little boat. Then you were rowed over to the pier and they let down a sort of basket. If there were women passengers, they'd sit on and the men would hang on the outside. You had to wait overnight there, and there was sort of a rudimentary hotel made of raw lumber. I remember waking up in the morning and seeing an eye through a knothole looking at me. (laughs)

Then, there are two trains a week that went to Arequipa and then to Lake Titicaca. The Department would allow you to wait over a train to become acclimatized at 7000 feet, because La Paz is 12,000. There was a place there called Quinta Bates run by an English woman. She wasn't there, but I stopped there, sent a telegram from there to La Paz telling them when I would arrive. The General Accounting Office disallowed that telegram. It said you don't have to send a telegram. It's not necessary. I've forgotten what it was...a dollar

Library of Congress

and a half or something like that. (laughs) There was a man there named McCarl, who was the Comptroller General then. He was feared by everybody.

Q (Jewell): Then, after him, we had Mr. Rooney.

SHELDON MILLS: No, he was a Congressman.

Q (Jewell): Congressman...that's right.

Q (Guido): He'd look at that sort of thing though. He would have disallowed that cable, too.

SHELDON MILLS: Anyway, after the next train, I took the train up to Puno, I think it was called, and then, at nightfall, you got on this little steamer which had been brought piece by piece and assembled there in the last century...little tiny cabins. You would look out in the morning, frigid, the Indians with their little caps over their ears.

Q (Jewell): How high is it? You said, 12,000?

SHELDON MILLS: It's about 12,000...no, it's higher than that.

FRANCESCA MILLS: 19,000 is the airport.

SHELDON MILLS: But La Paz is down at 12,000 feet, and you go past an old Indian town called Turujuma#a. Most of the monuments there are in German, I think, or they were. And then, you wind down into La Paz. At that time, in La Paz, we had a Legation with a Charg# and one American clerk. That was the staff for the Legation. In the Consulate, which was separate, there was Eddie Trueblood and myself. Later, Ed was transferred, and Paul Daniels came...you probably knew Paul.

Q (Guido): I know the name.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: Paul was a Foreign Service officer. I think he was the head of ARA at one period.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Well, I didn't get the La Paz treatment, because...

SHELDON MILLS: ...we were married after that. But we visited there after we retired.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Yes, and Shelly had told me about how in La Paz you bathed in the shower and then dusted yourself off.

SHELDON MILLS: You needed a feather duster to take the mud off! The water was very dark.

FRANCESCA MILLS: When we were in Ecuador, we went over so he could show me La Paz.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, we went there after we retired, but it's the same story.

FRANCESCA MILLS: And he was absolutely right.

Q (Guido): The water was still...

FRANCESCA MILLS: It was flowing mud. Just icky.

Q (Jewell): How was it for drinking? You had to filter and boil?

SHELDON MILLS: Yes.

FRANCESCA MILLS: Oh, yes.

SHELDON MILLS: Well, haven't you boiled water in most places?

Q (Jewell): Yes, but we never had it quite that bad. In West Africa we did.

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: Now, when I first met you, I was home on leave from Jordan.

Q (Guido): We met on the bus.

SHELDON MILLS: We met on the bus, and I'm trying to think of the man who introduced us.

Q (Guido): Oh dear.

SHELDON MILLS: I'd known him in the Mexican Division.

Q (Guido): Could it have been Bob Wilson?

SHELDON MILLS: No, it wasn't Bob. . *Q (Guido): It was someone that I...*

SHELDON MILLS: It was a man whose wife was ill and he had two daughters as I remember, and...

Q (Guido): But you were already thinking of coming to Santa Barbara.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes, that's right.

Q (Guido): Whoever introduced us knew that I had come from here. Goodness, I can't remember. *Q (Jewell): I ran into Stan Harris on a bus in Madrid once. It wasn't he?*

Q (Guido): Well, this was a bus in Washington.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes.

Q (Jewell): I realize that, yes. I thought maybe it had been Stan Harris who had been in Madrid and knew...

Library of Congress

SHELDON MILLS: He had been your boss, I think, in Rotterdam. Were you in Rotterdam or Amsterdam?

Q (Guido): Yes, I was in Rotterdam. It could have been Jeff Reveley [Paul Jefferson Reveley].

SHELDON MILLS: That's who it was!

Q (Guido): That's right.

SHELDON MILLS: Is he still living?

Q (Guido): No, he's not. He died a few years back. Very nice man. I enjoyed working for him. He was our first boss overseas.

SHELDON MILLS: He was in ARA, I think, in the Mexican Division. Maybe he was head of it for awhile.

Q (Guido): That's right.

SHELDON MILLS: While I was head of what they then called NWC (North and West Coast Affairs), and I think you... Had you been to the Dutch West Indies then or was that later?

Q (Jewell): No, that was later.

Q (Guido): I did get out to the West Dutch Indies. I think it was later, but I think that must have been...well, I'm not sure now. I remember meeting you. What year did you retire, because I was just...?

SHELDON MILLS: 1961. This was 1960.

Library of Congress

Q (Guido): This was 1960, just after we came back from Rotterdam, our first overseas post.

SHELDON MILLS: Yes.

Q (Guido): And where Jeff Reveley had been the Consul General over there.

Q (Jewell): Could I ask you something about Mrs. Reveley? She was the first, other than Grace Dreyfus, who was an institution. Mrs. Reveley was the first Foreign Service wife I ever encountered. And, of course, she was very different. Well, and the story was that she had been crossing the street in Havana and a car had killed a child and she had never recovered.

SHELDON MILLS: One of her children.

Q (Jewell): One of her children, but she was not...

SHELDON MILLS: I don't think I ever met her.

Q (Jewell): She really didn't go out much in Rotterdam.

SHELDON MILLS: I heard that mentally she was...

Q (Guido): You worked in the Department with Jeff Reveley, so you didn't socialize as much as when you were overseas?

Q (Jewell): You see, as this was our first post abroad and the day after we arrived, Jeff Reveley took us and our two children to Madoradam, the little Dutch village, that little miniature Dutch village, then back to his apartment in Rotterdam. And there was Mrs. Reveley. She smoked incessantly and shredded her cigarette butts in her fingertips. Her hands were brown with nicotine. And at receptions, I noticed later that she would stand by herself and shred cigarettes. And as a young wife, I wondered...

Library of Congress

FRANCESCA MILLS: What have I gotten into?

Q (Jewell): Yes, yes, exactly. We never did know why exactly.

SHELDON MILLS: Well, she had had a very upsetting experience.

Q (Jewell): You haven't mentioned your first post, Jordan.

SHELDON MILLS: Jordan was a real experience.

FRANCESCA MILLS: I left most of my heart there.

Q (Jewell): Most of it in India and then in Jordan?

SHELDON MILLS: Well, Romania, too. More than the Latin American countries. Jordan...I suppose that my attitude towards this tragedy in the Middle East was that of most Americans, before I was sent there, had a feeling of great sympathy for the Jews, the way they had been treated, little realizing that in the Middle East they'd be treating other people so badly. So, the telegram came "eyes only" and I read it: "The Department would like to recommend to the President that you be appointed Ambassador to Jordan. If offered the post, would you accept?"*Q (Guido): Where were you serving at the time?*

SHELDON MILLS: Afghanistan.

Q (Guido): Oh, so you were in Afghanistan?

SHELDON MILLS: We'd been in Afghanistan three years, and of course, I went home and consulted with Francesca. I didn't know much about the Middle East. We'd been through Beirut. However, that's about all I knew about the Middle East. Of course, we accepted and went home. King Hussein was on his first visit to the United States. We hadn't had an Ambassador to Jordan for sometime. There had been an attempt to unite Jordan and Iraq...the two cousins of the Kings...as an offset to the United Arab Republic, the

Library of Congress

union of Egypt and Syria. That had ended in the revolt in Iraq on July 14, 1958, with the assassination of the cousin, the Prime Minister, and some Jordanians who were ministers in the combined cabinet.

That was the end of the effort at union. Jordan had been under a *Chargé*, a man named Thomas K Wright, for almost a year when I was appointed there. They were getting to feel upset that there wasn't an American Ambassador. Pete Hart had been assigned there, but when this union of the two countries was announced, instead he was sent to Damascus as Consul General.

At any rate, I arrived in Jordan when it was still under a siege mentality. The American families had recently come back from Greece and Rome. I found they were holding a staff meeting every day. As soon as I took over, I ended that. I thought that the siege part had ended. Fortunately, I was right. I mean, that was my judgment, but they were still in that mental state. And so, I began my job in Jordan.

Q (Guido): Hussein was still relatively young? How old was he when you were there?

SHELDON MILLS: I suppose he was twenty-five or twenty-six. He was not married then. He had broken with his first wife, who was a little bit older than he and who was also a descendant of the family of the Prophet, but from an Egyptian branch. She was much better educated than he. He was sort of a playboy. I felt a great sympathy with him immediately. He's got quite a personality.

There were no great crises when I was in Jordan. I felt the injustice of the Israelis after the War of 1948, grabbing the part of Palestine that had been allotted for an Arab state. "Right of Conquest," they said it was. It was quite a happy assignment in many ways. I felt the Palestinians were educated people. Seemed to have great perception. They knew when you were faking and when you weren't. They recognized sincerity. It was only after I retired that I became so outspoken in my criticism of what Israel has done.

Library of Congress

Q (Guido): Even at that time, the Administration tended to be more pro-Israeli than Arab, I would think.

SHELDON MILLS: Well, not quite.Q (Guido): Less so than...

SHELDON MILLS: In 1956, Eisenhower had forced the Israelis, after the British and French had withdrawn from their adventure with the Israelis, he forced the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai, and he said that the United States was not going to recognize "Conquest by Force."

However, I remember going to the White House when King Hussein was there, before I went to Jordan, with John Foster Dulles. He told Hussein, he said, "Well, we're very glad to help you. Now, we're not anti-Israeli." He just told Hussein that outright. And Hussein said, "I understand that." However, he certainly wasn't pro-Israeli as we've become in years since then...after 1967, for example. Or under Haig. It was a feeling that we were more evenhanded. We were not providing Israel with armaments. They got most of the armaments from England, some from France until 1967, some from South Africa. We may have given them a minimum amount, but we weren't providing Jordan with armaments either. They got most of their armaments and they had a military training mission from the British.

Our main effort was to try to hope that somehow peace could be brought about on an equitable basis and in helping the Jordanians with technical assistance. For example, there was what they called the East Ghor Canal, and we helped on that. Opened up a tunnel that had been built by the Romans... this Yarmuk Canal. We also opened old tanks, as they called them, which we call reservoirs, from Roman days.

Q (Guido): Did they reuse them?

SHELDON MILLS: Reused them, and when there's a rain, they'd collect water. We helped them with a hospital, but largely water. Not much in education. They got their

Library of Congress

education...well, we did have an educational advisor, but I don't think we were very effective in that field. They got quite a bit from the United Nations. But it was a very pleasant feeling. I've been quite flattered to have people who were either on the staff or who were with the AID program or the military people...there weren't too many...tell me it was their happiest period in the Foreign Service. Which is quite gratifying.

***BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Sheldon T. Mills

Spouse Entered Service: 1928Left Service: 1961You Entered Service: 1934Left Service: 1961

Posts: 1929-31La Paz, Bolivia 1931-34Panama, Canal Zone 1934-39Bucharest, Romania 1939-40Cambridge, Massachusetts(Harvard University, Economics training) 1940-43Santiago, Chile 1943-47New Delhi, India 1947-50Department of State, Washington, DC 1950-52Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 1952-54New Delhi, India 1954-56AE/P Quito, Ecuador 1956-59AE/P Kabul, Afghanistan 1959-61AE/P Amman, Jordan

Spouse's Position: Ambassador

Place/Date of birth: Portland, Oregon; June 22, 1906

Maiden Name: Francesca Dekum

Parents (Name, Profession)

Adolph A. Dekum, Businessman

Linda Andrews Dekum, Housewife

Schools (Prep, University):

Library of Congress

Miss Caitlin's School, Portland, Oregon

Reed College, Portland, Oregon

Date/ Place of Marriage: Portland, Oregon; January 23, 1932

Children:

Sheila Mills Richter

Mary Mills Presby

Linda Mills Sipprelle

Profession: Housewife

End of interview